

FOREIGN AFFAIRS



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Dear

Thank you for your letter, which gives me an opportunity to comment on our printing an article in FOREIGN AFFAIRS by George A. Carver, Jr., a member of the staff of C.I.A., without including that fact in the description of the author.

The origins, character and connections of the Viet Cong emerged last winter as a matter of obvious importance in any negotiation which might be undertaken by our Government. I had not seen any adequate investigation of the subject in an American magazine. Mr. Carver seemed the obvious choice to prepare an historical analysis for us because a previous article by him ("The Real Revolution in South Viet Nam," FOREIGN AFFAIRS, April 1965) had attracted unusually wide and most favorable attention and because the subject was of such complexity that no one who had not been giving it constant study for a long period could possibly deal with it satisfactorily. I invited the article directly from him, not through C.I.A.

I would have preferred to indicate Mr. Carver's connection with C.I.A. However, C.I.A. has a general rule against divulging the identity of its staff members. I felt that the rule worked against its own best interests in this case, since it would gain credit by showing that its staff contained specialists able to meet the highest standards of scholarship; but the rule that staff members cannot write as such is a standing one. My feeling that the intrinsic merits of the article would outweigh this disadvantage seemed to me justified when I received the manuscript.

I regret that the great value of this article is being lost sight of at a time when the subject is so important for our understanding of the nature of the enemy with which we must deal in whatever negotiations lie ahead. When I was in South Viet Nam last month this point was forcibly borne in on me, and I felt particularly pleased that the Carver article would add considerably to the basis of fact on which the American public would view any such negotiations. The feeling was confirmed when I showed a copy of the article to two of the best-known and respected American journalists whom I happened to meet in Singapore.

One of these journalists, who has spent the better part of three years in South Viet Nam, and who is strongly critical of the Administration's policy there, wrote me as follows: "I thought the Carver piece first rate, the best analysis I have seen of the Viet Cong and Hanoi tie-up. His documentation is excellent, and, to his credit he does not carry things too far,

in that he admits that differences exist within the structure but that the peculiar control exercised by the Lao Dong keeps these differences more or less under control." The other news man, a regular correspondent for one of the leading American papers which has been steadily critical of the Administration's actions in Viet Nam, spoke to me in similarly enthusiastic terms. They both knew Mr. Carver's connection with C.I.A. and neither thought, obviously, that it affected his judgement or the value of his opinions.

At the risk of writing at too great length, I must add a bit of information which I acquired in South Viet Nam and which reinforces the accuracy of Mr. Carver's analysis. A considerable quantity of operational orders and other documentation had just been captured from a Viet Cong headquarters near the point on the Cambodian border where the Ho Chi Minh trails enter South Viet Nam, about 30 kilometers southwest of Pleiku. I was told that all these orders, without exception, emanated from the Politbureau in Hanoi; not one came from, or via, the National Liberation Front. It seems plain that the N.L.F. which was planned originally as a rival to the Saigon Government, is now being played down; the present object is to take over the Saigon Government itself. As a result, the usefulness of the N.L.F. has disappeared and it no longer is used even as a means of transmitting orders to Viet Cong forces in the field.

I hope that you will look again at the Carver article with a fresh eye. And whether or not it seems to you as useful and

valuable a contribution as it does to me, I hope you will not believe for an instant that I could have been induced to print a "planted" article in FOREIGN AFFAIRS for any purpose. I have worked for 42 years to give FOREIGN AFFAIRS a reputation for impartiality and absolute independence, and to make it deserve that reputation. It is particularly distressing to me that the author's connection with a government agency has led you to suppose that I am in some way influenced by that agency or by the views of the Administration of which it is a part. This is contrary to fact. My judgement as to the value of this particular article and the wisdom of printing it may have been wrong; my reasons for printing it were simply and solely to give the American public a better basis on which to judge the negotiations which I trust lie ahead as our Government attempts to extricate us from a menacing situation.

Yours sincerely,

Hamilton Fish Armstrong